



The Influence of Digital Content Marketing Fit on Customer Engagement Through Content Engagement in B2B Services

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ABSTRACT

In the era of digital transformation, Digital Content Marketing (DCM) has become a key strategy for increasing B2B customer engagement. Telkomsel Enterprise uses various digital platforms to distribute educational content, product promotions, and case studies supporting the customer journey. However, challenges remain in ensuring that content effectively aligns with customer journey stages to maximize engagement and business outcomes. This research aims to analyze the effect of content–customer journey stage fit on content engagement and firm engagement, while testing the mediating role of content engagement and the moderating effects of social media usage frequency and organizational position. This research employed a quantitative approach using scenario-based online experiments. Data were collected from 420 B2B customers of Telkomsel Enterprise who had been exposed to the company's digital marketing content. Analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to examine direct, mediating, and moderating relationships. Results show that perceived content–journey fit significantly increases content engagement, which fully mediates its effect on firm engagement. Social media usage frequency strengthens the impact of content–journey fit on content engagement, while higher organizational position weakens the effect of content engagement on firm engagement.

Keywords:

Digital Content Marketing; customer engagement; B2B; customer journey

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INTRODUCTION

Business-to-business (B2B) companies increasingly adopt digital content marketing (DCM) to build customer engagement along the customer journey (Hidayat et al., 2025). Telkomsel Enterprise, Indonesia's leading telecom operator for B2B solutions, has implemented DCM strategies since 2021 using channels such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (X) to deliver educational content, product promotions, and case studies.

Despite these efforts, the effectiveness of Telkomsel Enterprise's DCM remains limited. Report data (Q4 2024) shows high total reach exceeding 300,000 impressions in several campaigns, but with low conversion rates on key platforms (Choi & Lee, 2020). For example, LinkedIn recorded an engagement rate (CTR) as low as 2.01%, while Twitter (X) had only 0.09%. Although Facebook and Instagram achieved higher click numbers, conversion from engagement to meaningful business interactions remains suboptimal (Kim & Park, 2021). Moreover, monthly trends in click-to-reach rate vary significantly, from as low as 2.35% in September to 37.70% in November 2024, highlighting inconsistencies in content appeal and audience targeting (Jang et al., 2021). This suggests that while awareness and traffic increase through digital channels, alignment between content types and customer journey stages is often lacking, reducing effectiveness in driving customer actions such as proposals, negotiations, or closed sales (Meyer et al., 2022; Wang & Lee, 2020). Understanding customer behavior and optimizing content strategy can improve conversion rates and engagement in digital marketing (Zhang et al., 2020; Chung & Lee, 2021).

Prior research by Salonen et al. (2024) emphasizes that perceived fit between content and customer journey stages is critical to achieving engagement. Content that is misaligned with B2B buyer stages may fail to generate meaningful interest or facilitate decision-making.

Previous research by Järvinen & Taiminen (2016) has also shown that marketing automation and personalized content according to the stages of the journey can significantly increase engagement in the context of B2B. This is especially important given that over 70% of B2B customers conduct independent online research before engaging directly with sales teams.

Given these challenges, it becomes crucial for Telkomsel Enterprise to ensure that its DCM strategy does more than simply push products; it must deliver relevant, high-value content tailored to different stages of the customer journey. The study aims to investigate whether perceived content–journey fit significantly affects content engagement, and whether such engagement can, in turn, drive firm-level business interactions (firm engagement).

Furthermore, the research explores moderating effects of social media usage frequency, which may amplify engagement, and organizational position, which could influence decision-maker responsiveness to marketing content. By clarifying these relationships, this study provides insights to improve the strategic effectiveness of DCM in B2B contexts.

Despite the growing adoption of Digital Content Marketing (DCM) strategies in B2B markets, there is still limited empirical evidence on how content effectiveness depends on its fit with the customer journey stages, especially in emerging markets like Indonesia. While Telkomsel Enterprise has invested in delivering various types of digital content (educational, product-related, and use-case content) via multiple platforms (LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and X/Twitter), internal reports show that engagement rates remain relatively low on key channels (e.g., 2.01% CTR on LinkedIn, 0.09% on Twitter).

This suggests a potential mismatch between the content delivered and the customer's information needs at different stages of the buying journey (Salonen et al., 2024). Prior research emphasizes that content must be timely and tailored to customer journey stages to be effective (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; Cortez et al., 2023). Misalignment can result in reduced engagement and diminished impact on downstream outcomes such as firm-level engagement or sales interactions (Brodie et al., 2013).

Moreover, most existing studies have focused on overall engagement metrics without testing whether content engagement mediates the relationship between content fit and firm-level outcomes (Salonen et al., 2024). Although mediation models have been widely applied in B2C contexts, for example, brand equity effects on loyalty mediated by customer satisfaction (Aspari Sugiati et al., 2023), such mediated processes remain underexplored in B2B digital content marketing. This limits understanding of the specific process through which content effectiveness is realized. Customer characteristics also add complexity to this process. For example, buyers with high social media use may have stronger preferences and greater ease in evaluating digital content (Dwivedi et al., 2021), while organizational position can influence how decision-makers interpret and respond to marketing content (Diba et al., 2019). These moderating effects have rarely been examined systematically in B2B content marketing research. Addressing these gaps is especially relevant for Telkomsel Enterprise, which operates in a B2B context with long, multi-stage buying processes. Aligning content with the customer journey can help improve customer engagement metrics and ultimately drive firm-level interactions such as proposals, negotiations, and conversions. Based on these considerations, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

- H1.** Perceived fit between content and the customer journey stage positively affects content engagement.
- H2.** Content engagement positively affects firm engagement, i.e., the intention to conduct further business interaction with the firm.
- H3.** Content engagement mediates the relationship between perceived content–journey fit and firm engagement.

- H4.** The positive effect of content–journey fit on content engagement is moderated by social media usage frequency, such that the relationship is stronger for customers with higher social media use.
- H5.** The relationship between content engagement and firm engagement is moderated by the buyer’s organizational position, such that the effect is stronger for customers in higher organizational positions.

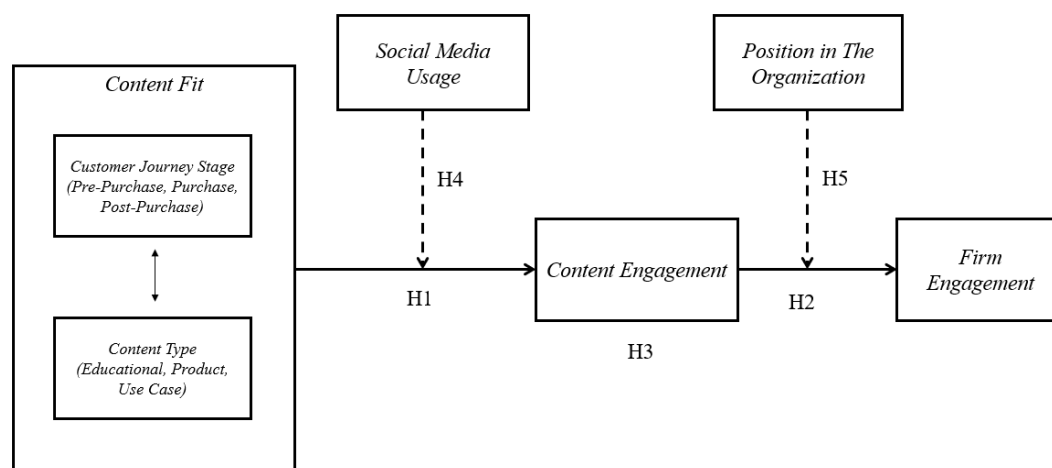


Figure 1. Research Model

Source: Salonen *et al.* (2024)

This conceptual model from Salonen (2024) integrates these direct, mediated, and moderated relationships, aiming to provide a systematic understanding of how *content–journey-stage fit* translates into concrete *firm engagement* outcomes in a B2B context. By applying this model to Telkomsel Enterprise's B2B customer base, this study addresses an important practical and theoretical gap in understanding *digital content marketing* effectiveness in emerging markets.

METHOD

Research Design

This research employed a scenario-based survey design to examine the relationships between perceived *content–journey-stage fit*, *content engagement*, and *firm engagement* in a B2B context. An online survey approach was chosen due to its high practicality and efficiency in reaching B2B decision-makers across multiple organizations (cf. Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). The research was conducted among customers of Telkomsel Enterprise in Indonesia who had been exposed to Telkomsel's *digital marketing content*.

The scenario was designed to reflect real B2B purchasing situations, where respondents evaluated different types of *digital content* (educational, product-related, and use-case content) in the context of different customer journey stages (*pre-purchase*, *purchase*, *post-purchase*). This approach increases realism and external validity by mimicking the actual decision-making environment in which B2B buyers encounter Telkomsel's *digital content*.

Measures

The survey instrument measured the key constructs in the research model:

1. *Content engagement* was operationalized as the respondent's intention to interact with the content, measured through items adapted from prior social media marketing research

(e.g., likelihood of liking, commenting, or sharing). Respondents rated on a 1–7 scale their likelihood of engaging with the presented content.

2. *Firm engagement* was assessed with a single item measuring the likelihood that, if contacted by a Telkomsel Enterprise representative, the respondent would agree to discuss solutions or arrange a business meeting (1 = extremely unlikely, 7 = extremely likely). This item reflected the firm-level business outcome relevant in B2B sales.
3. *Perceived content–journey-stage fit* was the key independent variable. Respondents were asked to evaluate whether the presented content type matched their expectations and needs at the given customer journey stage. This perceived fit was measured on a *Likert scale* (1 = extremely unlikely, 7 = extremely likely). Content types included educational content, product-related content, and use-case content.
4. Moderating variables included *social media usage* and *job position*. *Social media usage* was measured through agreement with statements such as "Do you often use social media to find information related to business needs?" (0 = no, 1 = yes). *Job position* was measured by asking respondents to indicate their hierarchical level in the organization (coded as 1/2/3 for top, middle, or lower management level).

Data Collection and Sample

Data were collected using an online questionnaire distributed via Telkomsel Enterprise's B2B customer database and targeted outreach to customers who had previously interacted with Telkomsel's *digital content*. The sampling targeted B2B decision-makers across industries in Indonesia, ensuring respondents were relevant to the study's context. A total of 420 usable responses were collected after cleaning for missing data and quality checks. The sample included decision-makers, managers, and professionals from diverse sectors such as telecommunications, IT, services, and manufacturing. Screening questions ensured that respondents had experience evaluating B2B *digital marketing content* and were involved in purchasing decisions for their company. Demographic data indicated a broad representation across organizational levels, with respondents including top-level management (e.g., directors, owners), mid-level management (e.g., department heads), and first-level management (e.g., supervisors, team leads).

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0. PLS-SEM was chosen due to its suitability for complex models involving mediation and moderation and its ability to handle non-normal data distributions (Hair et al., 2022). Measurement model assessments included tests for reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity using standard criteria (e.g., Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability, AVE, HTMT). The structural model was then evaluated to test the hypothesized relationships among perceived *content–journey-stage fit*, *content engagement*, and *firm engagement*, including mediation by *content engagement* and moderation by *social media usage* and *job position*. Indirect effects were calculated using bootstrapping procedures with 5000 subsamples to assess mediation significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reliability, Validity and Discriminant Test

Measurement model evaluation confirmed the reliability and validity of all constructs. Outer loadings for all indicators exceeded the 0.70 threshold.

Table 1. Outer Loadings Variables

Variable	Indicator	Loading	t-statistic	p-value
ContEng	CauseEng1	0.756	38.264	0.000
	CauseEng2	0.758	39.184	0.000
	CauseEng3	0.751	38.676	0.000
	CauseEng4	0.734	35.930	0.000
	EduEng1	0.779	44.839	0.000
	EduEng2	0.732	38.489	0.000
	EduEng3	0.709	31.528	0.000
	EduEng4	0.726	37.210	0.000
	ProdEng1	0.780	42.917	0.000
	ProdEng2	0.748	35.647	0.000
	ProdEng3	0.753	36.927	0.000
	ProdEng4	0.789	46.829	0.000
ContFit	FitCause	0.932	192.813	0.000
	FitProd	0.950	223.399	0.000
	FitEdu	0.946	211.614	0.000
FirmEng	FirmEng1	1.000	n/a	n/a
POS1	POS1	1.000	n/a	n/a
SMU1	SMU1	1.000	n/a	n/a

Source : Data Processed, 2025

The Composite Reliability (CR) values were above 0.90 for all constructs, indicating excellent internal consistency. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were all greater than 0.50, supporting convergent validity.

Table 2. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
ContEng	0.931	0.94	0.565
ContFit	0.937	0.96	0.889

Source : Data Processed, 2025

Discriminant validity was also confirmed using HTMT ratios, with all HTMT values remaining below 0.90 (except for a single non-critical pairing that was theoretically justified and retained). These results support the adequacy of the measurement model for hypothesis testing.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity Test Results (HTMT)

Variable Pair	HTMT Value
ContEng – ContFit	0.864
ContEng – FirmEng	0.715
ContFit – FirmEng	0.661
ContEng – POS1	0.091
ContFit – POS1	0.068

Variable Pair	HTMT Value
FirmEng – POS1	0.005
ContEng – SMU1	0.052
ContFit – SMU1	0.034
FirmEng – SMU1	0.041
POS1 – SMU1	0.241

Source: Data Processed, 2025

Hypothesis Testing

The structural model was estimated using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 4. Figure 2 illustrates the final model with path coefficients and significance levels.

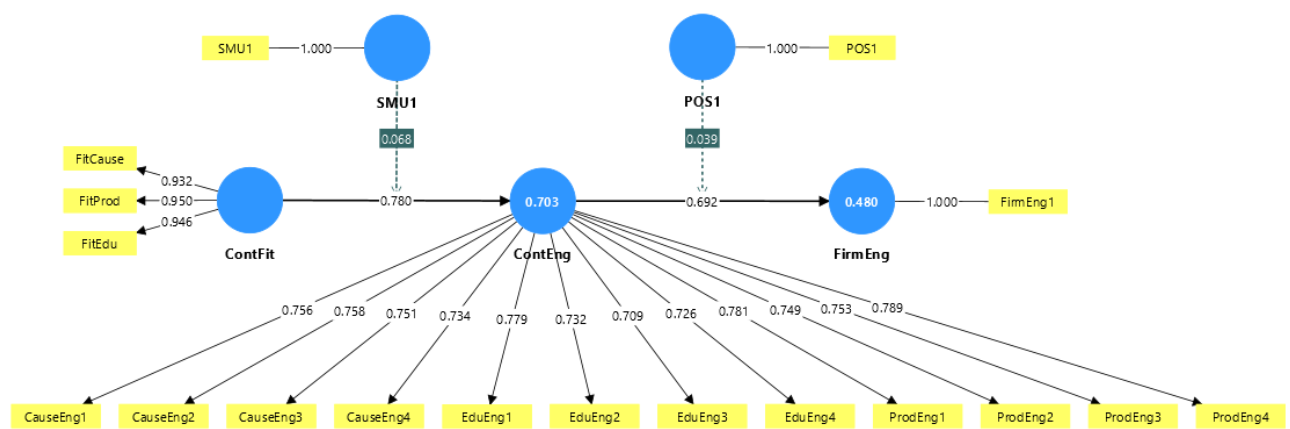


Figure 2. The Path Model of Hypothesis Testing

Source : Data Processed, 2025

Table 4. Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient (β)	t-statistics	p-value	Status
H1	ContFit $\rightarrow$ ContEng	0.861	17.48	0	Supported
H2	ContEng $\rightarrow$ FirmEng	0.697	13.671	0	Supported
H3	ContFit $\rightarrow$ ContEng $\rightarrow$ FirmEng (Mediation)	0.6	12.841	0	Supported
H4	SMU1 x ContFit $\rightarrow$ ContEng (Moderation)	0.127	3.38	0.001	Supported
H5	POS1 x ContEng $\rightarrow$ FirmEng (Moderation)	-0.118	2.15	0.032	Supported

Source : Data Processed, 2025

The structural model analysis produced strong empirical support for all hypothesized relationships (Table 4). First, the perceived fit between content and the customer journey stage (ContFit) had a large, positive, and highly significant effect on content engagement (ContEng) ($\beta = 0.861$, $t = 17.48$, $p < 0.001$). This result supports H1, confirming that content perceived as well-matched to the customer's journey stage leads to higher engagement levels. Second, content engagement (ContEng) itself showed a substantial positive effect on firm-level engagement (FirmEng) ($\beta = 0.697$, $t = 13.671$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2. This indicates that

higher customer interaction with content can translate into a greater willingness to engage in business interactions with the firm. Third, mediation analysis demonstrated that content engagement fully mediated the relationship between content fit and firm engagement. The indirect effect of ContFit on FirmEng through ContEng was significant ($\beta = 0.600$, $t = 12.841$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3. This finding suggests that aligning content to the customer journey indirectly drives firm-level engagement by increasing content engagement first. Regarding moderating effects, social media usage frequency (SMU1) significantly moderated the relationship between content fit and content engagement ($\beta = 0.127$, $t = 3.38$, $p = 0.001$), supporting H4. The positive coefficient indicates that the impact of content fit on content engagement is stronger for users with higher social media use. Finally, the customer's organizational position (POS1) significantly moderated the effect of content engagement on firm engagement ($\beta = -0.118$, $t = 2.15$, $p = 0.032$), supporting H5. The negative coefficient suggests that the influence of content engagement on firm-level engagement is weaker for customers in higher-level organizational positions. This reflects potential differences in decision-making styles or responsibilities across organizational levels

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that perceived *content–customer journey-stage fit* significantly enhances *content engagement*, which fully mediates its impact on *firm-level engagement* among Telkomsel Enterprise's B2B customers. The results highlight that aligning *digital content* with specific buying stages is essential for driving meaningful engagement and supporting business outcomes. Additionally, *social media usage* positively moderates the effect of *content fit* on engagement, suggesting the value of segmenting strategies based on digital behavior, while higher *organizational position* reduces the impact of *content engagement* on firm-level decisions. These findings validate Salonen et al.'s model in the Indonesian B2B telecommunications context, emphasizing the need for personalized, journey-aligned *content marketing* approaches in emerging markets. Future research should explore real-world behavioral data, cross-industry comparisons, and qualitative insights to deepen understanding of B2B customer engagement with *digital content*.

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